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REMARKS: Request Clearance and/or Comments
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WASHINGTON

January 19, 1984

Executive Registry

84-445

MEMORANDUM FOR: RICHARD DARMAN

FROM: FAITH RYAN WHITTLESEY *FRW*

**SUBJECT: Approval of attached paper entitled
"Persecution of Christians in
Nicaragua" for a White House DIGEST**

Please find attached a revised edition of the paper entitled "Persecution of Christian Groups in Nicaragua." The revisions were suggested by State, Defense and the CIA in the course of their review.

We would like to make the attached paper a White House DIGEST as soon as possible. The NSC has reviewed and cleared the paper. Thank you.

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Attachment

PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIAN GROUPS IN NICARAGUA

"The religion of the workers has no God, because it seeks to restore the divinity of Man."

Karl Marx

"Every religious idea, every idea of a god, even flirting with the idea of a god, is unutterable vileness of the most dangerous kind, 'contagion' of the most abominable kind. Millions of sins, filthy deeds, acts of violence, and physical contagions are far less dangerous than the subtle spiritual idea of a god."

Lenin

9

History has shown us that Communist regimes inevitably seek to either eradicate the Church or to subvert it. Ideologically, the Church's existence is repugnant to them. Allegiance to God prevents total allegiance to and subjugation by the State, which, according to Marx, is the salvific vehicle for the secular transformation of man into god.

The Communists cannot tolerate this limitation on their absolute power. Thus, in the Soviet Union all but a tiny percentage of churches have been closed and religious affiliation routinely brings the loss of precious privileges and sometimes brings more serious persecution.

In Nicaragua, the self-admitted Marxist-Leninist leaders of the government are following the same path. They are seeking to turn the Catholic Church, by far the largest in Nicaragua, into an arm of the government.

A small number of Catholic clergy have the government's official approval and sponsorship. They are used to generate support for the government, to spread the idea that only Marxists are true Christians, to defame and divide the mainstream Church, and even to assist the Sandinista government in the enforcement of Communist-style internal security.

Meanwhile, the Sandinistas have harrassed, persecuted and defamed legitimate church leaders, including Pope John Paul II. Church telecasts are subject to prior censorship and the Sandinistas seek to isolate the Church leadership from the people.

Suppression of minority Protestant groups has been much more brutal. Dozens of Protestant churches have been burned, Protestant leaders have been arrested, beaten, and deported. Certain Protestant churches have been officially denounced as instruments of American imperialism.

THE CHURCH VS. SOMOZA

Under the Somoza dictatorship, which was overthrown in 1979, the Catholic Church had been in the forefront of those forces calling for reform. Indeed, in 1979 the primate of Nicaragua, Archbishop Obando y Bravo, took the extraordinary step of announcing that the Somoza regime had become intolerable and that Christians could in good conscience revolt against it.

At that time, the revolution against Somoza was broad based and included most of the mainstream leadership of Nicaragua. The revolution was publically committed to democracy and pluralism. But, shortly after Somoza's ouster, the Communist faction -- with the control of the military -- began to consolidate its power.

Despite early danger signals, the Catholic hierarchy was initially supportive of the revolutionary government.

THE FIRST STEP

But, in October of 1980, the Sandinistas took their first real step toward the dual Communist goal of a) limiting the Church's influence, and b) coopting what is left of that influence for the government.

In a publicly promulgated policy on religion, the Sandinistas declared that Christians were not permitted to evangelize within Sandinista organizations. Moreover, only those religious who fully accepted the objectives of the Revolution, as put forth by the Sandinista leadership, were to be permitted to take an active role in public affairs. (1)

The Bishops responded swiftly and firmly, saying that such attempts to limit the influence of the Church were "totalitarian." Totalitarian systems, the Bishops argued, seek to turn the Church into an "instrument" by tolerating only those activities the government finds convenient. (2)

Edgard Macias served the Sandinista government as Vice Minister of Labor, but left Nicaragua when he realized the Sandinistas were intent on establishing a totalitarian Marxist-Leninist regime. Of the Sandinistas' attempt to turn the Church into an "instrument" Macias writes:

"The FSLN (the governing Sandinista organization) has had its plan of action drawn from the beginning, including unremitting harassment and the reduction and suppression of the social programs of the churches...They wish to reduce

them [the churches] to a strictly liturgical function, which would be to keep them within their temples...the social pastoral of the churches should not exist since it generates an influence that 'interferes' with the unique leadership that the Front pretends to be" (3)

For some time after this exchange between the Bishops and the Sandinistas, the Church went out of its way to say conciliatory things about the regime, hoping to salvage a relationship. The Sandinista leadership is attempting to publically represent itself as being pro-Church, something the overwhelming majority of the Catholic clergy seriously doubts. The historical record underscores these reservations.

PRIESTS AND POLITICS

In 1981, responding to Pope John Paul II's desire to keep the Church free of political entanglements, the Nicaraguan Bishops called on all Catholic clergy to limit their political activities to something less than full time devotion to the regime, or to any political faction.

A long controversy ensued. The Sandinista clergy refused to leave their posts. The Bishops, stymied, agreed that the Sandinista priests could temporarily remain in government as long as they did not exercise their priestly functions.

These high-ranking Sandinista priests that chose to discontinue their priestly functions while continuing to occupy political office are: Miguel D'Escoto, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Fernando Cardenal, director of Sandinista youth organizations; and his brother Ernesto, Minister of Culture.

Since that time, the Sandinistas campaign to set up a new government-controlled church steadily intensified. Priests who have expressed a desire to leave the regime have been told by the Junta that they cannot resign from their posts, according to Edgard Macias.

THE "PEOPLE'S CHURCH"

The first step was to coopt and expand a unique Latin American institution called the Christian base community.

The base community is a neighborhood group of Catholics who meet for prayer and religious services but who also work together for social and political reform. Over the years, most of these groups have not been Marxist, but have worked for reforms that most Americans would recognize as basic.

However, the bishops had long recognized that the base communities have had the potential to become "prisoners of political polarization or fashionable ideologies which want to exploit their immense potential." (4)

The Sandinistas began to exploit that potential. Many base communities have remained loyal to the Catholic hierarchy, but many have been made instruments of the revolution, part of what the Sandinistas refer to as "the People's Church," a church subservient to the government.

The Sandinistas began to speak openly of two churches, one, the "Popular Church" which is the friend of the people, and the other which oppresses the people.

Macias again:

"It is ridiculous to see the 'revolutionary commanders' (who are declared Marxist-Leninists) using Christian terminology and even ... giving homilies on what the role of religion and the bishops should be. They say that while there is Sandinismo (FSLN) there will be Christianity, letting it be understood that outside of themselves there is no Christianity...No better example of how a political group can 'appropriate' religion and model it to its objectives can be found...Remember that the structure of the FSLN as a political party is fascist and anti-democratic, where the National Directorate has been artificially mythified..." (5)

In reference to the traditional and "popular church", Sandinista junta member Sergio Ramirez stated that one of these "churches" was not revolutionary, but the other church was:

"a church of change. This church became the people's ally. This church boosted the revolution and committed itself to this revolution. This church is participating in the revolutionary process and is incorporating the patriotic and revolutionary priests of whom we are very proud into the government." (6)

In response, Archbishop Obando y Bravo has condemned "those who are trying to divide the Church" and spread the idea that there is "one bourgeois church and another church for the poor." The Vatican has become so alarmed at the attempt of the Sandinistas to divide the church in Nicaragua that the Pope issued a Pastoral letter on June 29, 1982 which criticized advocates of the "popular Church" for their

"...infiltration of strongly ideological connotations along the lines of certain political radicalization of the class struggle, of acceptance of violence for the carrying out of political ends. It is not through a political role, but through the priestly ministry that the people want to remain close to the Church."

THE CHURCH AND THE SECRET POLICE

One of the first steps the Sandinistas took was to combine many of the so-called Sandinista Defense Committees with Christian base communities. The Defense Committees provide a network of informers and neighborhood surveillance, and have the authority to bestow certain privileges, such as internal travel

permits or rationed items. These basic units of totalitarian control are also found in the Soviet Union, Eastern Bloc and Cuba.

According to Edgard Macias these these "people's churches," made up of the combination of the base communities and the defense committees, are under the supervision of Interior Minister Tomas Borge, whose portfolio includes the internal security/secret police apparatus.

The People's Church accounts for only an insignificant fraction of Nicaraguan Catholics. But the Sandinista controlled media pays enormous attention to their every action in support of the regime. The government endorses "liberation theology," the doctrine of the People's Church that portrays Christ as a Marxist revolutionary.

An underground publication from Honduras designed for group study, entitled "Reflections of an Honduran Christian Marxist," gives the typical perspective on "liberation theology": "[love for the poor] consists not only in giving them food, but in doing away with the cause of their poverty, that is their capitalist/imperialist system. And in order to do this a Christian not only can be, but must be a Socialist, Marxist-Leninist, violent revolutionary."

Geraldine O'Leary Macias, Edgard's wife, was for many years a Maryknoll missionary in Nicaragua where she worked for social reform. She has seen first hand the Communists' attempt to coopt genuine Christianity for their own purposes:

"The Marxists have been very astute in using liberation theology to make it appear Marxist, making being a Christian synonymous with being a Sandinista, and defining revolution as Marxism. The only major change in this approach has been brought about by the non-Nicaraguan Marxists. As the Cubans, Bulgarians and East Germans have taken major roles as advisors to the police, army and militia, their anti-religious fervor has made apparent the very real contradictions between what the people of Nicaragua want and what the Sandinistas want." (7)

CENSORSHIP

While publicizing the People's Church, the Sandinistas, by July of 1981, had begun to cut off the Church's access to the media. Customarily, the Archbishop, or a priest designated by him, had celebrated mass every Sunday on Managua television, giving a sermon in the course of the Mass.

But in July, 1981, the Sandinistas announced that televised Masses would be rotated among Catholic priests. The Archbishop, seeing that pro-Sandinista "priests" would be chosen, refused. The televised Masses were cancelled.

According to Macias:

"The Archbishop's television Mass was suppressed when Commander Tomas Borge, Minister of the Interior, decided to impose a system that would eliminate his presence, substituting him for Sandino-Christian priests. The strategy was to substitute the authority of the Archbishop and his faculty of leadership of his faithful with the authority of the Supreme Chief of State Security [Borge] and his small group of loyal priests." (8)

Catholic Radio has since fallen under heavy daily censorship. Since March 1982, the independent newspaper La Prensa, through which the Archbishop also communicated with the people, has fallen under censorship at times far more severe than that of the Somoza dictatorship. However, the Archbishop is still permitted to publish his homily in La Prensa. (9)

By Easter of 1982, church leaders were required to submit their homilies to the Minister of the Interior, Tomas Borge, to be approved for broadcasting.

CENSORING THE POPE

In June 1982, the Pope sent a pastoral letter to the people of Nicaragua denouncing the government's attempts to establish a parallel Church, but publication of the letter was initially refused.

Archbishop Obando y Bravo has commented extensively on the Pope's letter. His comments shed light on some of the specific groups and mechanisms the Sandinistas have used to create a parallel church:

"I believe that there is a true internal intention of dividing the Church as is mentioned by His Holiness. When we speak of a 'Popular church' we should understand that in Nicaragua there are several centers that support it. Five centers have been created, all very well supplied and organized: Centro Antonio Valdivieso, CEPA, Eje Ecumenico, CEPAD, and the Instituto Historico Centroamericano. Their resources are abundant, they have full-time employees, theologians and laity, recording and printing facilities and abundant international aid. These groups enjoy exclusive access to the State communications network which runs 100% of the television channels, 90% of the radio stations and two out of three newspapers..

"The virulence of their attacks has already reached the extreme of physical violence against some bishops. Externally the promoters of this popular church have mounted vast international propaganda campaigns...Vehicles for this are the international editions of Barricada...also their connections with other organs of Liberation Theology and skin religious groups distributed throughout the world. (10) (Emphasis added.)

Several of the Centers the Archbishop mentioned are often cited in this country.

According to Edgard Macias, the Sandinistas are even trying to create a new religious rite, the Sandino-Christian rite, complete with icons to Augusto Sandino, prayers to a new pantheon of martyred Sandinistas who are to be revered as saints, and even the beginnings of a cult of resurrection:

"Hung on the front of the old cathedral in Managua [was] an enormous picture of General Sandino in his most characteristic pose, but drawn within a white host, which is bordered by the red and black colors of the FSLN flag...The Nicaraguans were not over being surprised by this when on radio and television the campaign for the third anniversary of the revolution was spearheaded by a short ad in which the dead are no longer simply Sandinista heroes, but are now 'the Sandinista saints.' One named Navarrito, it is said 'died with worms eating his feet but he arose the same day,' thus comparing him with Jesus Christ, who, as we all know, took three days to do the same."

The most brazen use of the "People's Church" was made during John Paul II's visit to Nicaragua when he said Mass at a huge open square in Managua. Film taken by the Sandinista television network clearly shows that the Sandinistas used the occasion to stage a demonstration against the Pope during Mass.

As happens nearly everywhere the Pope goes, he was received with fervent enthusiasm by the crowd. During his homily he was interrupted again and again by friendly applause and cheers and shouts of "Long live the Pope!" The applause was particularly strong during those parts of his homily in which he denounced the "People's Church."

However, as the Sandinistas' own television film makes obvious, the places in the square nearest to the Pope were reserved for Sandinista activists, preequipped with microphones.

As the Pope came to the end of his homily these activists began to chant political slogans. When the Pope reached the most sacred part of the Mass, the consecration of the bread and wine, the activists equipped with microphones actually began to make speeches, nearly drowning out the words of consecration. The speakers demanded that the Pope insert into the Mass a prayer for the Sandinista martyrs -- perhaps as part of the plan to legitimize the Sandino-Christian rite.

The nine Sandinista "commandantes," who hold the real power in Nicaragua, stood on a platform near the Pope. They urged the demonstrators on, shouting slogans themselves and raising their fists in the air. At one point, uniformed men led the shouting activists in a protest march around the altar. Later, reliable sources revealed that the microphones used by the activists were

actually being controlled by the same Sandinista technicians controlling the Pope's microphone.

UNDERMINING THE CHURCH HIERARCHY

The Sandinistas have begun to interfere with the hierarchy's right to assign priests to parishes. There are reports that replacement priests appointed by the Archbishop have been harassed by Sandinista controlled mobs. These mobs, organized by the Sandinista defense committees and the internal security forces are referred to as las turbas divinas -- "the divine mobs."

Priests who do not preach or accept Marxist "theology," are under continuous harassment by the mobs. Especially in the countryside, legitimate priests often have their services interrupted. Sometimes the mobs will turn the Mass into a political meeting.

In Managua the Sandinistas have staged physical attacks against the legitimate clergy, including the Archbishop Bosco Vivas, the auxilliary bishop of Managua, who was shoved and pushed to the ground by a Sandinista mob last August. (11)

The Sandinistas have also mounted campaigns to discredit Church leaders, such as Father Bismark Carballo, the director of Catholic Radio and public spokesman for the Archbishop. Having been called to the home of a parishoner, he was forced to disrobe by security force personnel and then forced into the street in front of T.V. cameras and Sandinista mobs planted in advance.

After the pictures of the incident and the story were printed in the Nicaraguan press, the Sandinistas were badly embarrassed by this transparent attempt to frame a major Church spokesman.

By September 1982 the situation had gotten so serious that Archbishop John R. Roach, the President of the U.S. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, issued a statement criticizing the Sandinistas:

"In recent weeks, institutions and persons of the Church, including bishops, have been subjected to attacks of a serious, at times disgraceful nature...We cannot fail to protest in the strongest possible terms, the attempted defamation and acts of physical abuse directed at prominent clerics, the inappropriate exercise of State control over the communications media, including those of the Church, the apparent threats to the Church's role in education, and, most ominous of all, the increasing tendency of public demonstrations to result in bloody conflict." (12)

Edgard Macias sums up well the treatment of the Catholic Church by the Sandinistas:

"It [religion] is something to be provisionally permitted because it already exists and despite their wishes, has to be permitted as a 'lesser evil' that cannot be immediately eliminated. But it has been sentenced to a gradual and progressive extinction." (13)

PERSECUTION OF PROTESTANT GROUPS

Persecution of Protestant groups has been even more direct and brutal because their smaller size has left them more vulnerable.

While the Sandinistas were still consolidating their power immediately after the revolution, they did little to harass the Protestant groups. According to Humberto Belli, a former editor of La Prensa, the only independent newspaper in Nicaragua, up through 1981 there was little persecution except for harrassment of some village pastors.

Says Belli: "the Protestant pastors...were conscious of their vulnerability and tried to abstain from any kind of commentaries touching the political field. Some of them even preferred to reassure the government of their loyalty." (14)

Occasionally groups of "revolutionary Christians" published leaflets attacking Protestant denominations as agents of U.S. imperialism. The government controlled media often propagated these charges.

In 1982 these attacks became direct. According to Belli:

"In March, just a few days before the government cancelled all individual rights and decreed a state of emergency, Barricada, the official newspaper of the Sandinistas, published two front-page, 8 column reports on the Protestants, entitled: 'The Invasion of the Sects.'...In that Report most Protestant churches were portrayed as groups of fanatics and superstitious people who liked to manipulate people's emotions and were part of a world-wide strategy of cultural penetration orchestrated by U.S. imperialism."

"Shortly after these publications the attacks grew more and more vocal and the first physical threats were issued. Commander Tomas Borge...said there would be religious freedom for those who were with the revolution, but for those who were deceiving people and preaching negative attitudes their days were numbered." (15)

On July 30, 1982, Radio Sandino covered a speech on the subject by Borge. According to Radio Sandino:

"Borge said that the religious sects -- the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Adventists, the Mormons and other groups opposed to the revolution -- are under investigation...He

noted that a bill is being submitted to the State Council that will require religious sects to register with the authorities before they begin operation." (16)

In a speech on July 17 Borge had said:

"There are a large number of sects that are being funded by the CIA...Some of them have mother churches in the United States. The most famous sects -- and it is best for the people to know their enemies -- are: Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons and the Adventists...Other sects are the Voice of Acclamation and the Wesleyan Church, whatever the hell that means...It is evident that we have to make a serious study to counteract their diversionist activity financed by the CIA of the United States and take measures of a police nature according to the laws of the revolution in order to control and neutralize certain activities that disrupt the country's internal order. To begin with, a large number of these sects are not registered with the pertinent government offices, thus making them illegal." (17)

Borge encouraged mob action against the Protestant churches. By August 1982 more than 20 Managua Protestant Churches had been seized by the "divine mobs." Some, but not all, of the confiscated properties were returned, but only on condition that the ministers refrain from criticizing the government.

Among the Christian organizations forced out of Nicaragua is the Salvation Army, whose charitable and religious activities there ended in August, 1980 after "ominous verbal threats from authorities, and, finally, instructions to close up the program and leave the country." (18)

Religious persecution has also affected the small Jewish community in Nicaragua. The community had been so intimidated by Sandinista actions and rhetoric during and after the revolution that virtually the entire community has fled the country. An article by Shoshana Bryen in the Wall Street Journal summed up the situation well when it said:

"There are some who believe the actions taken against Jewish citizens were the result of severe Sandinista threats, the immediate confiscation of businesses and private property, the torching of Managua's synagogue (and later its confiscation) and the arrest and harrassment of Nicaragua's Jews were not examples of burgeoning socialism... Other small, politically vulnerable communities in that area may suffer a fate similar to the Jews in Nicaragua, where the PLO is assisting the Soviet Union in the export of revolution and anti-Semitism." (19)

RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION OF THE INDIANS

Perhaps the most tragic case of religious persecution is that of the Miskito, Sumo, and Rama Indians of Nicaragua's isolated Atlantic Coast.

Most of the members of these tribes are members of minority Protestant Churches, especially the Moravian church. Living in isolation from most of Nicaragua, they have had little to do with any government. The Moravian missionaries filled the gap by providing most of the schools, hospitals and support organizations that maintained the area.

The campaign of persecution against the Indians has thus far been directed largely at their religious leaders and institutions for it is through them that these groups are united and strengthened.

As Belli explains, "When the Sandinistas came to power in 1979, they immediately announced that their top priority was to 'rescue' the Atlantic Coast." Cuban and Nicaraguan personnel began to flood into the area.

The Sandinistas began a heavy-handed attempt to redesign the lives of the Indians along Marxist lines, and "started to replace the people's own leaders with [the Sandinistas'] own authorities -- many of whom were Cuban teachers and strangers." Resentments, repression, and riots followed in short order. Reports Belli:

"The Sandinistas blamed the events on counter-revolutionary and CIA inspired forces, and began attacking the most influential Moravian pastors. Some of them were jailed and others expelled, stimulating new waves of protest and repression. [The government] stepped up its attacks and dismantled the network of charitable organizations that, after a century of work, the Moravians had established." (20)

The Sandinistas sealed off the entire Atlantic coast. Travel to the region was allowed only by special permit. Indians were drafted into the militia. Those who refused were shot or forcibly relocated. Villages were forcibly evacuated and then burned. According to Edgard Macias, by midsummer 1982 the Sandinistas had destroyed 55 Moravian churches.

Ministers who are still allowed to preach in the region must submit their sermons to local Sandinista censors. Indian leaders have been rounded up and jailed. The three-tribe umbrella organization created to represent the Indians' interest to the government was shut down.

Two of the most prominent Moravian leaders, Rev. Norman Bent and Rev. Fernando Colomens had been prevented from staying in the Atlantic Coast area. The Moravian Social Action Committee has been closed by the FSLN.

In November of 1982, the Misurata Council of Ancients (elders), the legitimate representatives of the people of the three tribes, officially denounced the Sandinista government before the Organization of American States.

In that denunciation the Ancients explained that, despite their "active participation in the struggle for liberation [against Somoza] and our decided support for the revolutionary government headed by the Sandinista National Liberation Front...", their people had been subjected to "intense repression, lack of respect for our religious beliefs and traditions, imprisonment of our leaders, massive captures of peasants, women, the aged and children, rapes, beatings, torture, and the death and disappearance of prisoners..."

"The situation has progressively worsened... They have expelled us from the land we received from our ancestors... Thousands of members of our communities are at this time kept, on Nicaraguan territory, in concentration camps under strict military vigilance, while more than 1,500 Indians have been obliged to seek refuge in the sister republic of Honduras..."

"They live in refugee camps, almost at the mercy of the elements, with grave health and nutrition problems especially amongst the children who walk around practically naked and suffer from parasites and many illnesses."

The details of this persecution are particularly horrifying.

According to the Council of the Ancients, in January and February of 1982: "the FSLN with the pretext of 'spreading national sovereignty' destroyed 49 communities, burning more than 4,000 houses, and then, so that no one could return to their land of origin, cut down the fruit trees, shot all the domestic animals ... and forced the persons that lived there to begin a forced march that took 11 to 15 days in order to arrive at the different concentration camps..."

"During the forced march ... the invalids, lame, blind and paralyzed persons were gathered together in the village of Tulinbilia, they were put inside the Church and they were burned -- 13 persons thus died."

In February also, Rev. Sandalio Patron, the leader of the Sumo Indians, was imprisoned.

Throughout the year the same story was repeated. In the third week of March, according to the Ancients, four more villages were burned, all the houses, churches, and domestic animals destroyed.

In April, religious leader Rev. Abel Flores and 13 deacons were arrested, mounted into a government helicopter and whisked away. No one is told where they were taken. A community called

Suma de Kuahbul was occupied by the military. The villagers were forbidden to leave their homes, making normal life, including food gathering, impossible.

In May all churches in North Zelaya were told they must submit all messages for publication to the approval of State Security. The Indian community of Raity was destroyed; half the population fled to Honduras.

In June the Sandinista troops carried out the massacre of Musawas. Only the direct words of the Council of Ancients can adequately convey what happened in Musawas:

"On June 29, 1982, another military regiment of about 40 men appeared at about 9:00 PM. They captured [abducted] Mrs. Aquilina Robin, Calilda Lopez [and] Virginia Benjamin, and placed them in the church; about 30 minutes after, another group of soldiers brought two girls of 12 years each, [Maria Hernandez and Lodena Lopez] and they too were placed in the church. The women began to scream; about 11 o'clock that night, the relatives of the three women and two girls, filled with indignation and family love, approached the church and asked why they were ill-treating the women. They were also taken prisoners and brutally conducted into the church."

"Sometime around 12 o'clock that night, the Sandinista troop took the women out of the church. The girl, Maria Hernandez, of 12 years, was dragged out; because, after she was violated by the troop, she was unable to walk..."

"After the five women were carried outside the church, they were placed face down on the ground; one of the soldiers yelled 'not even as women are they any good; not even satisfaction can they give; I still remain with the desire, stinking daughters of sluts.' Presently a group of soldiers came out of the Church and machine gunned them."

Over the next 24 hours, 15 more villagers were murdered by the troops. "This act dispersed the community of Musawas. They went to the woodland looking how to save their lives. Thirty-three were captured and held hostage."

"The Community of Musawas presently in refugee camp in Mocoron is witness to all that took place at Musawas."

In July martial law was declared in the communities of Tuara, Sisín, Kuaquil, Boomsirpi and Yulotigni. The villagers were not allowed to leave their homes or celebrate religious services. According to the Indian elders, eight armed Sandinistas raped the 12 year old daughter of Rev. Serminio Nicho, a religious leader in Ninayeri Sandebay North.

According to the Ancients, the "months of August, September and October are a true Calvary for the 10 Indian communities of

Puerto Cabezas. The communities are put under a state of seige. The villagers are prohibited from fishing in the ocean, communal lands are expropriated, villagers are forbidden to leave the village. Masses and religious services are frequently closed down or can be celebrated only with previous permission."

The tactic of restricting the villagers to the village and of prohibiting them from fishing in the ocean or from using their communal lands is devastating because it can put the villagers on the brink of starvation. (21)

The Indians have given the Organization of American States (OAS) many pages of detailed eyewitness accounts of torture and murder by the Sandinistas. There is no need to recount all the gruesome stories here.

CONCLUSION

As the Nicaraguan Commandantes have repeatedly made clear, "Marxism is the scientific doctrine that guides our revolution ... our doctrine is Marxism-Leninism." (22) Conforming to that doctrine, the Sandinistas are systematically attempting to coopt religious organizations that might threaten the FSLN's ability to dominate Nicaraguan political and social life.

Due to the strength of the Catholic Church, the Sandinista strategy has been to infiltrate, censor and control, rather than to eradicate outright.

At times, particularly when the weight of foreign opinion has been high, the Sandinistas have backed off, at least overtly, their persecution of the Church. During this five-day period, however, the following actions were taken against the Church:

Midnight, Oct. 29, 1983: Mobs began to demonstrate at twenty-two churches in the Maqagua area, and at an unknown number of churches outside Managua. The mobs, which ranged in size from 50 to 200 persons, interrupted Masses, chanted at churchgoers, and in several cases threatened priests.

0800 Oct. 30: A mob armed with clubs arrived at San Judas church in Managua. According to the pro-government press, the mob was acting against a church planned demonstration against the new national military service law. The mob interrupted Mass, and reportedly struck Father Silvio Fonseca. The mob refused to allow Monsignor Bosco Vivas to enter the San Judas area. A second mob prevented the holding of a church bazaar (kermesse) later that day.

1030 Oct. 30: Catholic Church leadership (Curia) decided to cancel Masses for the day. Curia was unable to contact some priests, who carried out scheduled activities.

1700 Oct. 30: A mob armed with clubs interrupted Mass at the San Francisco church in the Bolonia area of Managua, breaking church windows and vandalizing cars.

Night of Oct. 30: A mob gathered in front of the Santa Maria church in the San Juan neighborhood of Managua. Another mob burned a tire on the front steps of the Santa Carmen church.

Oct. 31: The government revoked the residency of two foreign priests, in effect exiling them. The two priests were Luis Corral Prieto, of Spain, and Jose Maria Pacheco, of Costa Rica, respectively the director and assistant director of Salesian school in Masaya.

Oct. 31: The Government announced the arrest of a father Antonio (a citizen of Italy) for allegedly preaching against the national military service and advocating counterrevolutionary activities.

Nov. 2: The Catholic Church leadership postponed religious services for November 2, (All Souls' Day), calling instead for a day of fasting and prayer. The postponed masses were held November 3.

Sixty-five years of applied Marxist-Leninist doctrine have shown that communism will not accept co-existence with any religion that does not concede supreme authority to it. To the extent that Marxist-Leninist regimes allow churches to operate they do so because they are forced to, as in Poland, or for tactical reasons aimed at the ultimate objective of eradicating religion from society.

The overwhelming evidence of the wide-spread persecution of Christian Churches in Nicaragua is a sad reminder of the sometimes forgotten nature of Marxism-Leninism and its total antipathy for freedom of religion.

FOOTNOTES

1. "Comunicado Oficial de la Direccion Nacional del FSLN sobre la Religion," Barricada, October 7, 1980.

2. "Contestacion al Comunicado del FSLN sobre la Religion (October 17, 1980)," Revista del Pensamiento Centroamericano, July-December, 1980.

3. Macias, Edgard; "The Sandinista Revolution and Religion" presented to the White House Outreach Working Group on Central America; (July, 1983).

4. "Jesucristo y la Unidad de su Inlesia en Nicaragua," (Carta Pastoral, October 22, 1980), Revista del Pensamiento Centroamericano, July-December, 1980.

5. Macias, op. cit.
6. Radio Sandino, Managua, June 10, 1981.
7. Geraldine O'Leary de Macias; "Christians in the Sandinista Revolution," (January, 1983).
8. Macias, op. cit.
9. Washington Times, July 26, 1983.
10. Archbishop Obando y Bravo, "Comments on the Papal Letter," La Prensa, Managua, August 14, 1983.
11. Archbishop John R. Roche, comments on the United States Catholic Conference, Washington, D.C., September 9, 1982.
12. Roche, op. cit.
13. Macias, op. cit.
14. Humberto Belli, "Persecution of Protestants in Nicaragua: The Neglected Story," 1983.
15. Belli, op. cit.
16. Foreign Broadcast Information Service, (FBIS) Central America, August 2, 1982, p. 7.
17. FBIS, Central America, July 21, 1982, p. 13.
18. Letter, September 12, 1983 from Salvation Army LTC Ernest A. Miller.
19. Shoshana Bryen, The Wall Street Journal, August 24, 1983.
20. Belli, op, cit.
21. Miskito Indian Council of Ancients of Misurasata. Testimony presented to the Organization of American States, May, 1981 - October, 1982.
22. Humberto Ortega, quoted by Branko Lazitch in Est et Ouest (Paris) August 25, 1981.